

## **Assembly Joint Resolution No. 31**

### **RESOLUTION CHAPTER 33**

Assembly Joint Resolution No. 31—Relative to child nutrition programs.

[Filed with Secretary of State May 14, 2014.]

#### **LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST**

AJR 31, Skinner. Child nutrition programs: school meals.

This measure would declare that the Legislature supports federal standards for healthy meals, including those standards recently adopted pursuant to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, and it would urge the President and the Congress of the United States to ensure that reimbursement rates for school meals are adequate to fully fund the cost of producing a nutritious school meal relative to the cost of living in a region. The measure also would state that the eligibility scale used to qualify families for free and reduced-price meals be adjusted, as specified.

WHEREAS, The National School Lunch Program is declared to be the policy of Congress, “as a measure of national security, to safeguard the health and well-being of the nation’s children and to encourage the domestic consumption of nutritious agricultural commodities and other food, by assisting the states, through grants-in-aid and other means, in providing an adequate supply of food and other facilities for the establishment, maintenance, operation, and expansion of nonprofit school lunch programs”; and

WHEREAS, Federal regulations further state that participating schools shall ensure that children gain a full understanding of the relationship between proper eating and good health; and

WHEREAS, Child nutrition programs are responsible for collaborating with the school community to implement comprehensive nutrition and wellness policies in school districts; and

WHEREAS, All of California’s more than 6 million pupils deserve access to high-quality, safe, nutritious meals available in the school setting, recognizing the link between adequate nourishment and educational performance; and

WHEREAS, Children who experience hunger have been shown to be more likely to have lower math scores, decreased attentiveness, increased likelihood of repeating a grade, increased absences and tardiness, and more referrals to special education services; and

WHEREAS, Child nutrition programs in California provide over 4 million meals to schoolchildren daily, and must comply with complex state and federal requirements, provide adequate food preparation and dining facilities,

and meet budget requirements despite rapidly escalating food, energy, transportation, labor, and other costs; and

WHEREAS, Losses in the school meal programs must be offset by other revenue sources that would otherwise support classroom instruction; and

WHEREAS, Recent changes in federal menu planning regulations resulting from the federal Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 have increased costs so that they now exceed the additional reimbursements provided for school meals; and

WHEREAS, The difference between reimbursement and cost undermines the ability to continue to provide nutritious meals to all pupils; and

WHEREAS, The United States Department of Agriculture recognizes higher cost as a factor in determining reimbursement rates by allowing a higher federal reimbursement rate in Alaska and Hawaii; and

WHEREAS, Many families who qualify for reduced-price meals, prescribed by federal law using the federal poverty level, find it difficult to pay the reduced fee, and the fee for a paid meal is an insurmountable barrier to participation for an increasing number of families in California; and

WHEREAS, The eligibility scale to qualify pupils for free or reduced-price meals is the same scale throughout the country and does not consider regions with higher costs of living; and

WHEREAS, The January 2013 Institute of Medicine report “Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: Examining the Evidence to Define Benefit Adequacy” recognizes local and regional costs as negatively impacting the effectiveness of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; and

WHEREAS, The same dynamics impact school meal programs; and

WHEREAS, A self-sufficiency index, which identifies the income levels at which families can meet their most basic needs without public support, is available in all regions to apply to meal eligibility standards; and

WHEREAS, A single-parent household with two children in San Mateo County, California, needs \$56,280 to be self-sufficient, while a similar family in Guernsey County, Ohio, is self-sufficient with only \$24,258; now, therefore, be it

*Resolved by the Assembly and the Senate of the State of California, jointly,* That the Legislature supports federal standards for healthy meals, including those standards recently adopted pursuant to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, and urges the President and the Congress of the United States to ensure that reimbursement rates for school meals are adequate to fully fund the cost of producing a nutritious school meal relative to the cost of living in a region; and be it further

*Resolved,* That the eligibility scale used to qualify families for free and reduced-price meals be adjusted according to the self-sufficiency index for the region served; and be it further

*Resolved,* That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies of this resolution to the President and Vice President of the United States, to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, to the Majority Leader of the

United States Senate, and to each Senator and Representative from California in the Congress of the United States.

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